Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. While most people are aware of breast cancer, many forget to take the steps to have a plan to detect the disease in its early stages and encourage others to do the same. We have made a lot of progress but still have a long way to go.

5 Things We Get Wrong About Breast Cancer

“There is a lot of breast cancer awareness among people, but not necessarily a lot of knowledge
about the disease,” says radiation oncologist Dr. Marisa Weiss, founder of the website breastcancer.org. It can be dangerous to a woman's health when she chooses to believe a myth
rather than evidence-based findings about the disease.

5 Myths About Breast Cancer

1. **Using Deodorant Causes Breast Cancer**

Deodorant and antiperspirants don’t cause breast cancer. Period.

2. **Wearing an Under-Wire Bra-or Any Bra Causes Breast Cancer**

There is no evidence to support the bra myth.

3. **If I Have Cancer in One Breast, A Double Mastectomy Will Save My Life**

This one persists, as more women opt for double mastectomies — despite research showing it doesn’t improve survival rates.

4. **Exposing Cancer to Air Will Cause it to Spread**

The myth of air causing cancer spread could be related to doctors discovering that the cancer is more advanced than initially thought, requiring a more aggressive procedure. But there is absolutely no evidence to support this myth

5. **I Can’t Do Anything To Reduce My Risk**

There are certain things you can’t change. As you age, your risk of developing breast cancer goes up. You can’t change your genes either, but to say you can’t do anything is completely untrue. For example, you can lose weight, get physically active, limit alcohol intake.

Understanding Breast C

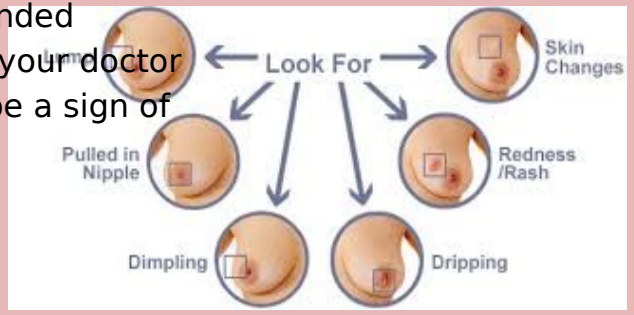
- **What is breast cancer and how common is it?**
  - The term “breast cancer” refers to a malignant tumor that has developed from cells “gone wild” in the breast
  - About 1 in 8 U.S. women (about 12%) will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime
  - For women in the U.S., breast cancer death rates are higher than those for any other cancer, besides lung cancer
  - Although not as common, males can get breast cancer too

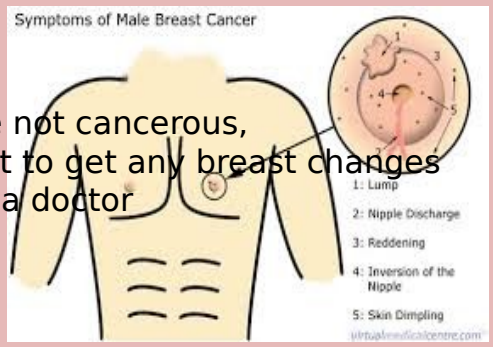
- **What are some of the risk factors?**
  - **Established:**
    - ***Simply being female**
    - ***Age (older=higher risk)**
    - Family history (risk doubles if you have a mother, sister, daughter with breast cancer)
    - Personal history of breast cancer
    - Race/ethnicity (Caucasian women have higher risk)
    - Being overweight, smoking, drinking alcohol, lack of exercise
    - Having dense breasts
    - Menstruating before the age of 12
    - Exposure to radiation (to the breast of chest)
  - **Emerging:**
    - Low vitamin D levels
    - Light exposure at night
    - Exposure to chemicals in cosmetics, food, plastic, and lawn and garden chemicals

*** Most significant risks**

Understanding Breast C

- **What are the symptoms?**
  - Initially there may be no symptoms-lumps may be too small to feel. Sometimes it can start as a lump you or your doctor can feel
    - A lump that is hard, painless and has uneven edges is more likely to be cancer
    - But sometimes cancers can be tender, soft, and rounded
    - It's important to have anything unusual checked by your doctor
  - Any of the following unusual changes to the breast may be a sign of breast cancer:
    - Swelling of all or part of the breast
    - Skin irritation or dimpling
    - Breast pain
    - Nipple pain or the nipple turning inward
    - Redness, scaliness, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
    - Nipple discharge other than breast milk
    - A lump in the underarm area
  - These changes also can be signs of less serious conditions that are not cancerous, such as an infection or a cyst. It's important to get any breast changes checked out promptly by a doctor





Reducing the Risk of Breast Cancer

- **Some risks you can control and some you can't**
- **Risks you can control (protective measures):**
  - Be physically active
  - Control your weight
  - Eat a healthy diet
  - Limit dose and duration of hormone therapy
  - Limit alcohol
  - Don't use tobacco
  - Avoid exposure to radiation and environmental pollution
  - Avoiding things known to cause cancer
  - Breast feed
  - Know your body and what's normal, and see your doctor if anything changes
  - Get enough sleep
  - Screening as appropriate (talk to your provider about which is best for you)
    - Breast self-exam
    - Clinical breast exam
    - Mammogram
- **Risks you can't control:**
  - Gender
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Age
  - Family history/genetics

Additional Reso

- American Cancer Society @ http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer/detailedguide/breast-cancer-additional
- National Cancer Institute @ http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/breast
- National Institute of Health @ http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/breastcancer.html